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RGA Leadership Statements on Healthcare

Governor Haley Barbour, chairman of the Republican Governors Association, and Governor Tim Pawlenty, RGA vice-chairman, both issued statement today outlining steps the President and Congress can take to improve the healthcare system.

Governor Haley Barbour: “Everyone agrees that our healthcare system is in need of reform, but the ideas the Democrats have pushed are not in line with what the American people want. Americans are not interested in a government takeover of our healthcare system that relies on unfunded mandates that would necessarily raise taxes, or increases in the already crushing load of debt, or burdensome new taxes on small business that stifle job creation and economic growth. There needs to be great deal more thought on how to pay for health care reform.”

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A major part of the Democrats’ plan is to expand Medicaid and shift much of the costs to the states. If these so-called reforms were enacted, it would cost Mississippi an additional \$360 million per year. This is money the states do not have and because states actually balance our budgets the only choice would be to raise taxes.

Fortunately, the majority of folks want common-sense solutions – like tort reform – that will lower costs without diminishing the quality of care or costing hundreds of billions of dollars that we don’t have.”

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Just a few years ago in Mississippi, doctors were fleeing the state because of junk lawsuits that were driving up their insurance premiums. We enacted tort reform and now malpractice insurance costs are down 42 percent.

There are similar reforms that can be made at the federal level that would improve our healthcare system. Let’s focus on step-by-step reforms and cost-effective ideas that improve our healthcare system without mortgaging the future.”

Governor Tim Pawlenty: “The Democrats’ proposals to overhaul our healthcare system depend on two untenable choices. The first is to usher in their programs by borrowing massive amounts of money. The President has already said increasing the debt is not an option, so the only other choice available is to raise taxes – the last thing they should consider in an economy struggling to recover.

If the Democrats are truly interested in reform, they will embrace the core Republican ideas that will make healthcare more affordable without the massive costs. Congress and

the President should work to allow insurance competition across state lines, encourage price comparisons to be made available on the internet, and allow small business to pool their resources to buy insurance for their employees.

Healthcare can be made more accessible if we simply make it more affordable.”

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